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RIGHTS OF PERSONS BELONGING TO NATIONAL OR ETHNIC, RELIGIOUS AND LINGUISTIC MINORITIES

Afghanistan*, Argentina, Australia*, Austria, Bangladesh, Belarus, Bhutan, Brazil, Bulgaria*, Canada, Cape Verde, Chile, Colombia*, Croatia*, Cyprus*, Czech Republic, Denmark, El Salvador, Finland*, France, Germany, Greece*, Guatemala, India, Ireland, Italy, Japan, Mexico, Netherlands*, Norway*, Peru, Poland, Portugal*, Romania*, Russian Federation, South Africa, Spain*, Sweden*, Switzerland*, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and United States of America: draft resolution

1998/.. Tolerance and pluralism as individual elements in the promotion and protection of human rights

The Commission on Human Rights,

Recalling the Preamble to the Charter of the United Nations, which calls for the practice of tolerance, peace and good neighbourliness to be pursued, inter alia to promote social progress and better standards of life in larger freedom,

Recalling also that the Universal Declaration of Human Rights affirms that education shall be directed to the full development of the human personality, the strengthening of respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms and shall promote understanding, tolerance and friendship among all nations, racial or religious groups,

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* In accordance with rule 69, paragraph 3, of the rules of procedure of the functional commissions of the Economic and Social Council.

Recalling further the relevant paragraphs of the Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action,

Noting that tolerance involves a positive acceptance of diversity and that pluralism encompasses the willingness to accord equal respect to the civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights of all individuals,

Recognizing that tolerance and pluralism strengthen democracy, facilitate the full enjoyment of all human rights and thereby constitute a sound foundation for civil society, social harmony and peace,

Aware that on the eve of the twenty-first century, the world is witness to historical and far-reaching transformations in the course of which forces of aggressive nationalism, absence of religious tolerance and ethnic extremism continue to produce fresh challenges,

Noting that in a multi-ethnic, multi-religious and multicultural world, no society is beyond the dangers posed by the absence of tolerance and the violence which this can breed,

Conscious that all forms of discrimination, including on ethnic grounds, are factors that promote intolerance and infringe upon human rights and fundamental freedoms, which in turn may threaten democratic pluralism and endanger harmony, peace and stability both within States and internationally,

Convinced that the guiding principles of democratic society, such as equality, the rule of law, accountability of government, the observance of human rights, respect for pluralism and the practice of tolerance, need to be actively promoted by the international community,

Recognizing that efforts to promote tolerance require cooperation by States, civil society and individuals,

Recognizing also that promoting a culture of tolerance through human rights education is an objective that must be advanced in all States, and that the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights and mechanisms of the United Nations human rights system have an important role to play in this regard,

1. Condemns unequivocally all violent acts and activities that infringe upon human rights, fundamental freedoms and democracy;

2. Reiterates the obligation of all States and the international community to:

(a) Promote universal respect for and observance of all human rights and fundamental freedoms;

(b) Protect effectively the human rights of all persons belonging to national or ethnic, religious and linguistic minorities without any discrimination and in full equality before the law;

(c) Take steps to counter all manifestations of hatred, intolerance and acts of violence;

(d) Promote and enhance tolerance, coexistence and harmonious relations between ethnic, religious, linguistic and other groups and ensure that the values of pluralism, respect for diversity and non-discrimination are promoted effectively;

(e) Promote a culture conducive to promoting and protecting human rights, fundamental freedoms and tolerance, inter alia through education leading to genuine pluralism, a positive acceptance of diversity of opinion and belief and respect for the dignity of the human person;

3. Calls upon the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights and her Office to:

(a) Include, in its work programmes, within overall existing resources, the promotion of tolerance, where appropriate through workshops and seminars, using mass media and non-governmental organizations and through its programme of advisory services and technical cooperation to assist countries in their national programmes;

(b) Undertake, in that regard, specific educational initiatives and public awareness activities for the promotion of tolerance and pluralism, within the programmes and activities being implemented as part of the United Nations Decade for Human Rights Education, 1995-2005, the International Decade of the World's Indigenous People, 1995-2005 and the Third Decade to Combat Racism and Racial Discrimination, 1993-2003;

(c) Advise or assist countries, upon request, through its programme of advisory services and technical cooperation, to put in place effective safeguards, including appropriate legislation, to guarantee the full enjoyment of all human rights by all segments of their population, without discrimination of any kind;

(d) Include details of activities undertaken by the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights to implement the present resolution in her report to the Commission at its fifty-sixth session;

4. Calls upon the relevant mechanisms of the Commission to:

(a) Attach the highest priority to the effective promotion, at the national and international levels, of the values of democracy, pluralism and tolerance;

(b) Further study situations and conditions that promote tolerance;

(c) Continue efforts aimed at identifying commonly accepted principles and best practices to promote tolerance and pluralism;

5. Welcomes the role of civil society, particularly non-governmental organizations working at the grass-roots level, in disseminating the importance of tolerance and pluralism through their awareness-raising activities;

6. Decides to consider this question at its fifty-sixth session under the relevant agenda item.

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